

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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DOCKET NO. 08-287

v.

\*

SECTION: "R"

SHAWNZELL VENSON  
also known as Shawn Meyers

\*

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\* \* \*

FACTUAL BASIS

If this case were to proceed to trial, the United States would prove the following facts beyond a reasonable doubt:

Agents with the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Federal Bureau of Investigation would testify that in the summer of 2007 they began an investigation into the attempted theft of government funds associated with the Louisiana Road Home program ("LRH"). The LRH received its money from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, an agency and department of the United States, to provide eligible homeowners in Louisiana with grants to rebuild or relocate their homes following the hurricanes of 2005, namely Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Agents would further testify that First American Title Insurance Company, operating in New Orleans, Louisiana, and elsewhere, was an entity

responsible for completing the closing documentation necessary for LRH recipients to receive their grant money from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. This documentation included bank routing instructions for the LRH money to be wired directly into a recipient's bank account after closing. In the summer of 2007, agents investigated five separate incidents of attempted theft and wire fraud of LRH grant money.

One of the incidents involved an elderly individual named J.W. At trial, an employee with ASI Federal Credit Union ("ASI") would testify that prior to July 27, 2007, she received a call from a man identifying himself as the defendant, WILLIE SMITH, informing her that a LRH grant for his father J.W. would soon be wired into SMITH's ASI account. SMITH told the employee that his dad lived in Dallas, Texas and the money was to go into SMITH's account so that SMITH could pay for repairs on the house.

At trial, evidence and testimony would be presented to show that J.W. was not related to SMITH nor did he know SMITH. J.W., who was born in 1924, was an elderly LRH grant recipient who closed on a grant worth \$123,950 at First American Title Insurance Company on or about July 27, 2007. J.W.'s LRH closing documentation would be presented to show that the routing instructions for the LRH wire were fraudulently changed to wire J.W.'s money from First American Trust, FSB, 5 First American Way, Santa Ana, California 92707 to SMITH's Account, No. 5484170, at ASI Federal Credit Union, 5508 Citrus Blvd., Harahan, Louisiana 70123. Employees with First American Title Insurance Company would testify that defendant, DERRICK BEAULIEU, worked in the closing department of First American Title Insurance Company at the time J.W. closed on his LRH grant. BEAULIEU acted as a witness to J.W.'s closing. BEAULIEU, **VENSON**, and SMITH conspired to change J.W.'s bank account

information so that J.W.'s LRH money was wired into SMITH's account.

An ASI employee would testify that because J.W.'s name was not on SMITH's account she told SMITH that J.W. would need to execute an affidavit of forgery giving ASI permission to hold J.W.'s money in SMITH's account. **VENSON** was SMITH's fiancé and along with SMITH made numerous telephone calls to ASI to assure the employee that they were going to have J.W. execute the affidavit of forgery. When talking to ASI about J.W., **VENSON** posed as SMITH's sister "Nicole" and told an ASI employee that J.W. was elderly. **VENSON** admits that J.W. was targeted for this scheme because he was elderly.

On or about August 2, 2007, J.W.'s LRH money was wired into SMITH's account at ASI then returned to First American Title Insurance Company because the name of the account holder, SMITH, was not the same as the LRH grant recipient, J.W. After an ASI employee explained that the money had been returned **VENSON** and SMITH persisted in their efforts to get the money back. Toll records would be introduced to show that between July 25, 2007 and August 9, 2007, **VENSON** and BEAULIEU exchanged numerous telephone calls. **VENSON** and BEAULIEU admit that they regularly communicated with each other about the receipt and return of the LRH money. **VENSON** admits that she attempted to get ASI to retrieve J.W.'s money until she learned that J.W. had received his money from First American Title Company in the form of a check. At trial, evidence and testimony would be presented to show that J.W. was issued a check for his LRH money on August 6, 2007 and that the money was paid on August 8,

2007. Had J.W.'s money remained in SMITH's ASI account, **VENSON**, BEAULIEU, and

SMITH would have shared the money and used it for their own benefit.

READ AND APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
EMILY K. GREENFIELD (LA 28587)  
Assistant United States Attorney

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DATE

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SHAWNCELL VENSON  
Defendant

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

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VALERIE WELZ JUSSELIN ( )  
Attorney for Shawnzell Venson

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DATE